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EFFECTIVE

omnichannel

RETAIL EXPERIENCE

in 2015

RETAILERS' TOP PAINS AND BEST PRACTICE
SOLUTIONS TO RESOLVE THEM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction:
Which trends have been driving the omnichannel revolution?

'Omnichannel' was one of the hottest topics in the retail world in 2014. In a nutshell, omnichannel thinking is evangelizing the need to **merge channels** - and at the same time, diminishing the importance of **differentiating between specific channels** at all - to deliver a **seamless customer experience** no matter when, where and how.

To kick off our report, let's take a look at the key trends driving this business revolution.

It's not just a goal, it's a necessity.

Omnichannel is increasingly demanded by customers. 84% of customers believe that retailers should put more effort into better integrating their online and offline channels. [Ref 1]

It's a market opportunity your company can't miss.

Omnichannel customers also tend to shop more frequently and spend about 3.5 times more than their regular peers. [Ref 2]

Deloitte found that during the holiday shopping season of 2014, such shoppers were expected to spend an average of $592 on gifts; 66% more than customers who only shop in stores. [Ref 3]

Its importance - and market value - will grow over time.

Experts predict that by 2025, the ratio of online and offline purchases will be 50-50%, whilst researching information about products will almost exclusively happen using digital sources. [Ref 4]

In fact, digital interactions already influence approximately 36 cents of every dollar spent in the retail stores with an estimated value of $1.1 trillion.

Most of your competitors are already working towards it.

70% of retailers use the term 'omnichannel' to define their retail strategy and another 24% are allegedly working on it. [Ref 5]

Chances are high that companies who are missing out on this revolution will lag behind their peers - in terms of customer experience, competitive advantage and revenue alike.

To help companies succeed, we will take a look at:

- The **biggest pains of retailers** that can impede their desired progress to **leverage omnichannel opportunities.**

- What **potential reasons** may lead to these problems from the perspective of your **customers' behavior.**

- An array of innovative solutions that are able to **resolve these problems.**

- **Exciting real-life examples by retailers** with a 'best practice' value.

CURE FOR RETAILERS'

TOP PROBLEMS

Tips for a successful omnichannel retail experience strategy

problem

Customers visit my stores, taking up my sales assistants´time...
then they just walk out the door, I wish I knew where...
I´m worried they get the same product online somewhere else.

The diagnosis is: showrooming. This happens when customers look around at the brick-and-mortar stores first, then make the actual purchase online - for example on the e-commerce website of another company.

Even if the opposite phenomenon (when customers first research products online, then go to physical stores to continue the purchase journey) seems to surpass the showrooming threat, physical retail locations can't afford themselves the consequential profit loss - or simply put, burying their heads in the sand.

Related insights
1/2 of customers do showrooming | 2/3 of customers do webrooming
Source: Business Insider [A]

Actually, there is a lot of potential in retail stores. In a study, 97% of surveyed retailers actually believed that stores can help retailers differentiate themselves from online-only retailers.

However, their role does need to be rethought, shifting them from a 'commerce destination' to an 'omnichannel' one. [Ref 6]

One potential reason for your customers to abandon your physical store: They believe they find better prices at your online-based competitors.

TIP #01

Price Matching: treat it as part of the story, not as the protagonist

Retail professionals argue that price-matching on its own **is not enough to drive sales conversion**. To stay competitive, it has to be paired with a great customer experience.

For example, you can introduce omnichannel promotions instead of plain price-matching.

See **Art of Shaving** who proactively informs their in-store sales assistants of their current digital and mobile promotions to extend the store experience. [Ref 7]

Or, you can do price-matching paired with communicating the in-store experience as an added value.

BEST PRACTICE: BEST BUY

Best Buy's approach is a great example of how retailers can combat showrooming by embracing it.

1) They started a holiday 'Low Price Guarantee' campaign, promising that they would be on par with those of e-commerce websites like Amazon or discounter Wal-Mart.

2) They've used the tagline of your 'Ultimate Holiday Showroom' as a 'fun way to embrace showrooming'.

This way, they've highlighted fact that they've offered the latest technologies at a low price, inviting customers to come to their stores to experience the products in real life. [Ref 8]

Another potential reason for your customers to abandon your physical store: They believe it's easier to get the product of their choice if they buy it online – think about range and delivery.

TIP #02

Merge and manage inventory in new ways for 'total visibility'

Smart retailers know that **encouraging customers to access the full inventory** from their stores:

- Helps them leverage spontaneous **cross-selling opportunities** by immediate **live support** and full overview of the **product range.**

- Pairs the **joy of experiencing products** in a brick-and-mortar environment with the **convenience of online shopping**.

- The so called **'endless aisle' concept** also enables smaller footprint stores to provide access to a bigger array of SKUs in-store, **improving ROI of merchandising operations**.

Research shows that almost half of customers strongly believe that having this option **improves their shopping experience**. [Ref 9]
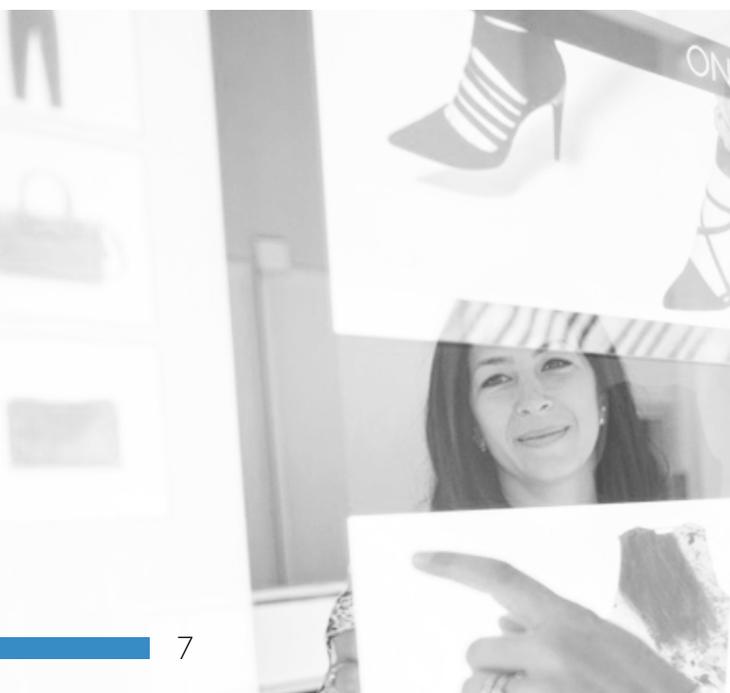
BEST PRACTICE: REBECCA MINKOFF

Rebecca Minkoff's interactive store experience generated some serious buzz in 2014. The fashion retailer teamed up with eBay to bring of the magic the digital world into their store.

Their interactive mirrors placed in the fitting rooms not only let customers purchase the selected apparel by paying online, they also 'flashed' some suggestions for matching accessories on the side of the screen. In-store experience, online purchase and cross-selling: what a bundle! [Ref 10]

TIP #03

Embrace customers' hunger for digital information

Statistics reveal that customers increasingly prefer **researching products and related information on digital devices**, even while being at the stores.

If you want to stop customers from leaving you store and looking around online, **provide convenient, extended information in real time.**

RELATED INSIGHTS

72% of young shoppers research their options online before making it to a store.

2/3 of shoppers go on their smartphone at some point before actually making a purchase at the store.

BEST PRACTICE: WAITROSE

UK grocery retailer Waitrose shows how retailers can leverage mobile and digital information to 'entertain' and engage customers inside the stores.

For example, shoppers can use their phone as a Quick Check handset, scanning items to check information including reviews and ratings about the products - then adding them to the basket with one click.

Their new site dedicated to wines also ties brick-and-mortar and online together as customers can find personalized information before choosing the right bottle. [Ref 11]

Remind customers on their in-store favorites to trigger follow-up purchase

Provide recommendations that enhance the mood to **fill their shopping cart in your online store once they got home.**

BEST PRACTICE: REBECCA MINKOFF

Rebecca Minkoff's previously mentioned store experience extends beyond those four walls.

Their connected fitting room (equipped with smart mirrors) informs the store not only about what shopper has bought, but also what they have left behind in the 'booth'.

As the customer has already provided their contact information as part of the in-store journey, the retailer has the opportunity to contact them after leaving.

This way, the shopper receives an extra follow-up 'impulse' to finally purchase that beautiful dress left at the store via the brand's digital platforms. [Ref 12]

problem

Analytics show that visitors spend time in my online store, but then they often get out of sight...**maybe to buy at a retail store or from a competitor.**

Almost 2/3 of customers have been practicing 'reverse showrooming' ('webrooming' or 'ROPO'), researching products online, then purchasing offline.

Merchandise worth $4 trillion was abandoned in online shopping carts in 2014, even if 63% of that would have been potentially recoverable. Whether you are an etailer or a retailer that also has e-commerce operations, this is a serious threat.

One potential reason for your customers to do webrooming: The product is sold out online – an annoying feeling when someone has already fallen in love with an item.

TIP #05

'Send from stores': a new way to 'deliver' a great omnichannel performance

Integrating the **stock of physical stores into e-commerce operations** is another way to achieve **'total inventory integration'** - so that the customers get what they want no matter which channel they've been using.
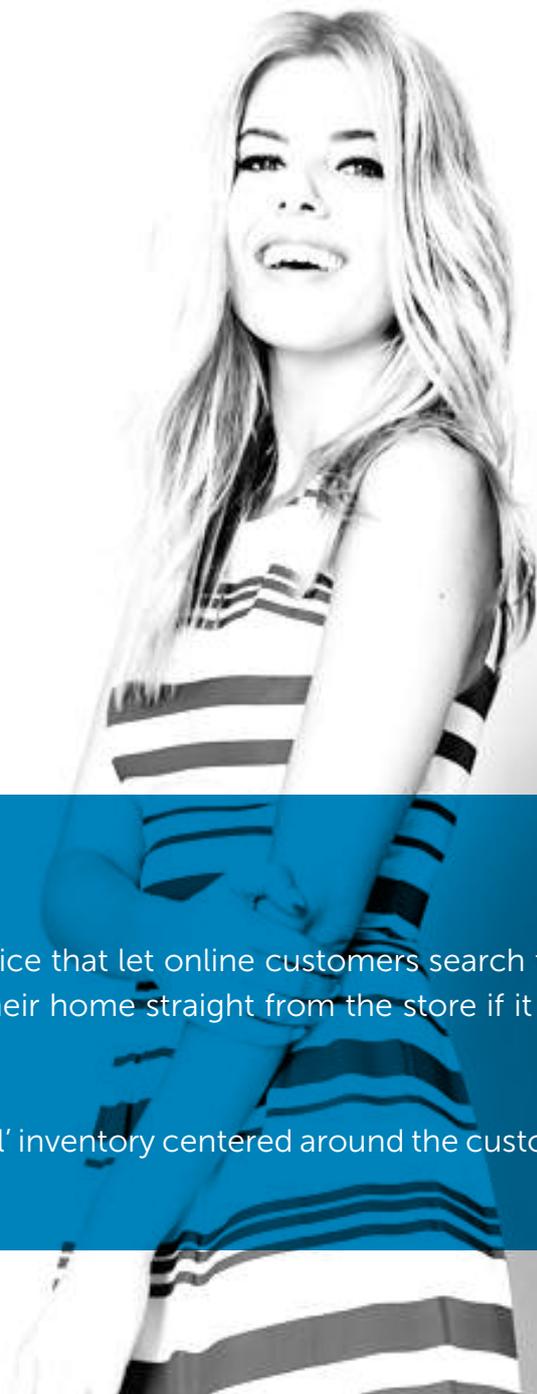
BEST PRACTICE: OASIS

Fashion retailer Oasis launched a 'Seek & Send' service that let online customers search the inventory of the physical stores and get the apparel sent to their home straight from the store if it was sold out online.

This way, they managed to build a truly 'omnichannel' inventory centered around the customer's needs. [Ref 13]

Another potential reason for your customers to do webrooming: They want to 'know' the product better, but it's hard to find more info without help.
It's also impossible to see it realistically enough.

New ways of presenting products online, similar to a real store experience

The downside of online shopping is the limitation of the customer experience: so far, customers have not been able to **'feel' and 'experience' the products** as realistically as it has been usual in physical retail.

Luckily, new solutions have emerged on the market, for example that of Whisbi, which lets companies:

- **'Teleport' their online customers to their stores or showrooms in real time**

- **Showcase physical products to web visitors through** real-time video streamed by sales reps **wearing smart glasses** such as Google Glass and Epson or **using the camera of an Android smartphone**

- **Address all customer questions and concerns** during an **interactive online session** (that synchronizes a normal phone call with video, co-browsing, chat and tracking) to turn more 'visitors' into 'buyers'

- Share a **'real store experience'** with their online customers

Such a solution can help businesses connect the worlds of e-commerce and physical retail in an omnichannel customer experience solution with a unique differentiator value.
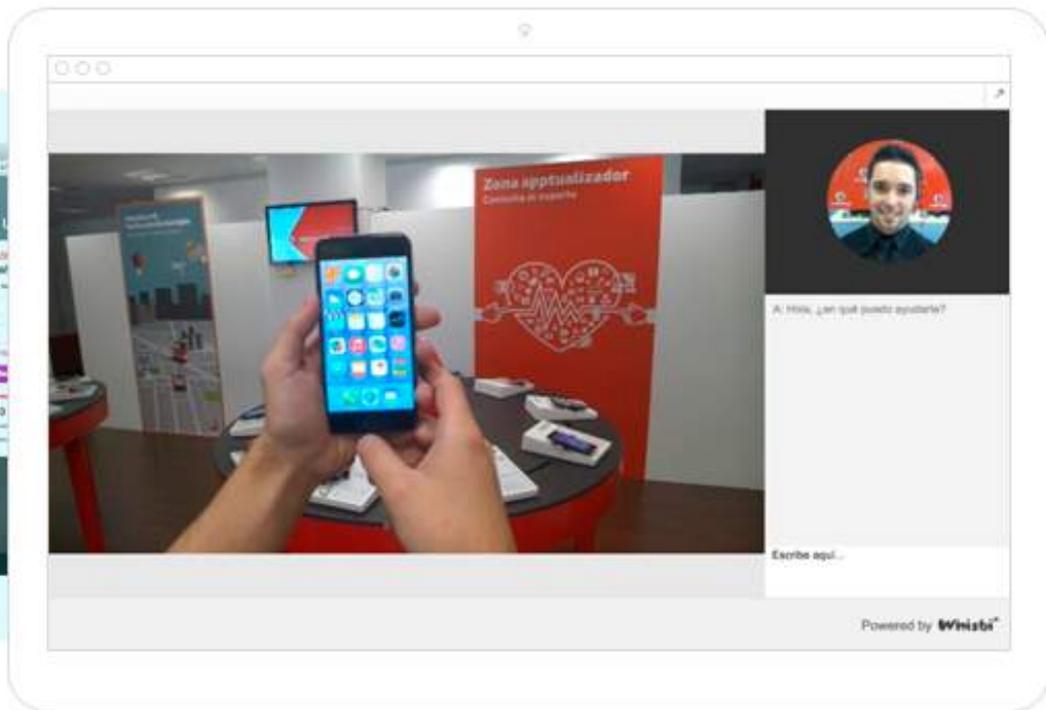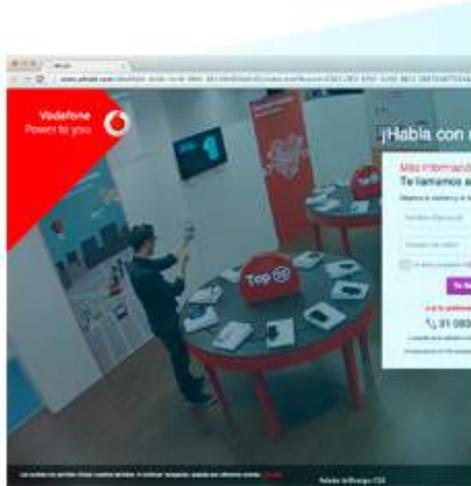
BEST PRACTICE: VODAFONE

Vodafone was one of the pioneer companies implementing Whisbi's innovative software for Retail & E-commerce.

Whenever an online customer has been looking around on the smartphone product pages on Vodafone's website (for example, that of iPhone 6), an eye-catching call-to-action button invited them to reach out to the company whenever they had a question.

With one click, the customer got connected to a sales representative at a real store. That's when the magic happened: in real time, the customer became able to see the desired phone through the eyes of the sales assistant who was wearing smart glasses, e.g. Google Glass or using an Android smartphone camera.

The sales rep could show how the phone works, what it really looked like, how it 'felt'. The customer saw all this in real time from the comfort of their home!

This unique customer experience helped Vodafone close more sales, then even fill out an order form in real time. [Ref 14]

problem

The e-commerce side of my business is growing but it still means a relatively small share within my overall revenue. My brick-and-mortar stores take up most of the 'pie', but they also have high related costs and the footfall is not growing. I wish there was a way to optimize both.

To this problem, retailers have been giving different answers. For example, US retailer Macy's has decided to **close some of their physical retail locations** to focus on their digital-driven operations. [Ref 15]

However, you don't necessarily have to sacrifice your stores. Generally said, **innovative approaches** don't force you to shut down physical locations but help you to:

- Improve the **productivity of physical stores** and store assistants.

- At the same time, better **monetize online leads**.

- **Increase the overall ROI** of your omnichannel retail operations.

Attract online customers to your stores with delivery options such as click-and-collect

Solutions such as click-and-collect can actually be a good way to **attract customers to your existing physical locations** without the need to sacrifice them.

While the customer has purchased the item online, the fact that they will pick it up at one of the brick-and-mortar locations paves the way for **cross-selling at the store itself.**
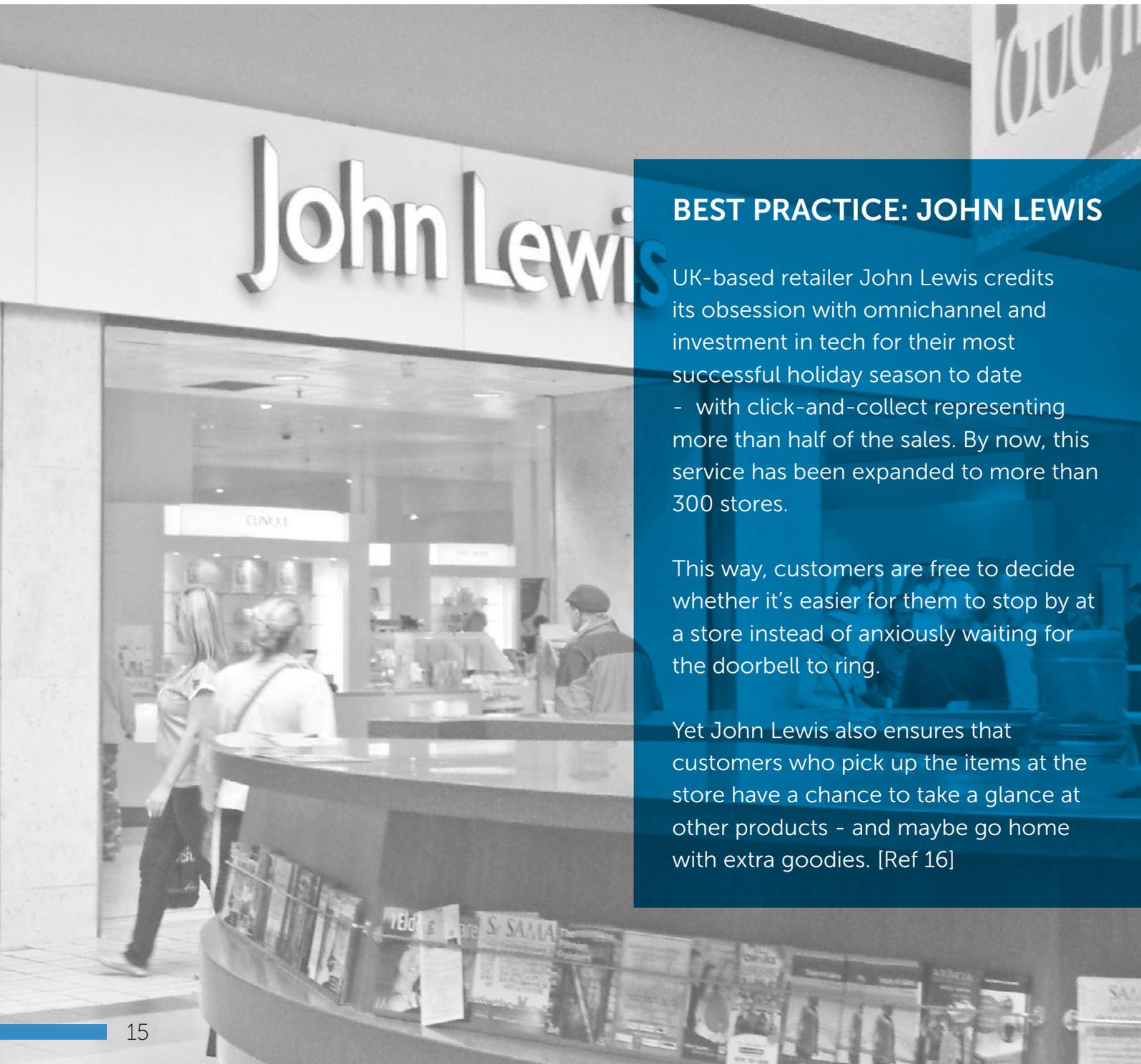
BEST PRACTICE: JOHN LEWIS

UK-based retailer John Lewis credits its obsession with omnichannel and investment in tech for their most successful holiday season to date - with click-and-collect representing more than half of the sales. By now, this service has been expanded to more than 300 stores.

This way, customers are free to decide whether it's easier for them to stop by at a store instead of anxiously waiting for the doorbell to ring.

Yet John Lewis also ensures that customers who pick up the items at the store have a chance to take a glance at other products - and maybe go home with extra goodies. [Ref 16]

Reinvent the 'connected' store or showroom to share an 'omnichannel' store experience and drive leads

Innovative **showroom and pop-up shops projects** can **combine digital with the joy of experiencing products** - and the brand itself - in a substantial way.

You may come up with classic, 'on-site' showroom experiences.

BEST PRACTICE: MARKS & SPENCER

Fashion retailer Marks & Spencer set up an 'e-boutique' in the heart of Amsterdam, representing the future of retail with 'cutting-edge technology' - not to mention showcasing their latest fashion collection.

A virtual clothing rack allowed customers to 'see' apparel on models. Besides the large screens, physical rails with clothing samples were also included.

Style advisers with iPads were at hand to offer guidance to the customers browsing items if needed. Any purchases made via the screens were shipped to the store in form of 'click and collect' or straight to the customers' home. [Ref 17]

However, there are more advanced solutions that can bring a connected 'store experience' to your online platforms as well.

Imagine store assistants becoming able to **show high-value products straight from the physical locations to online customers in real time**, such as a car or a furniture.

Such products are not often purchased online, but such a seamless, powerful customer experience can help you:

- **Approach leads as part of one holistic process** where you usher the customer until the end of the funnel even if it involves multiple channels and touchpoints;

- Trigger interest that **leads to a follow-up visit at the stores** to continue the purchase journey;

- Hence better **monetize online visits** as well.

BEST PRACTICE: FIAT

Fiat has been using Whisbi's new solution for Retail & E-commerce to drive online customers to their dealerships in an innovative way.

Whenever a customer has been looking at the offers on Fiat's websites for Fiat 500 and Jeep, a floating Call-to-Action button invited them to take a virtual tour to the store in real time.

The customer got connected to the showroom and in a few seconds, they could see the chosen car through the eyes of the sales person who was wearing smart glasses such as a Google Glass while talking to them on the phone.

The sales rep took a seat in the car, started to show features on the dashboard - all the while, the customer was watching this via real-time video miles and miles apart!

By showing customers how gorgeous the cars really looked, Fiat managed to book more follow-up test drives at the dealerships, besides sharing a first customized offer in real time.

Most importantly, they became able to better monetize online leads and get the most business value out of web visits. [Ref 18]

problem

I wish I could find a way to better **differentiate my customer experience** from competitors at all touchpoints

In the customer-centric retail age, success largely depends on **delivering a great customer experience** - and it is a **fruitful 'investment'**.

Why?

- Studies show that customer experience is becoming the **new competitive advantage** that helps you **differentiate** yourself from competitors.

See related infographic >

- Customers 'redeem' companies for it. Research reveals that around **86% of consumers are willing to pay up to 25% more for a better customer experience**. [Ref 19]

One potential reason why your customers believe that your customer experience is unsatisfactory: it feels like a standard 'one size fits all' approach that lacks a personalized touch.

The so called **'me-commerce'** philosophy is centered around the need for **personalized experiences all along the customer journey**. [Ref 20]

Generally, customization can be **embodied in different ways**; in form of personalized offers, loyalty programs, customized branded content and so on. What these solutions have in common that they build on a **deep understanding of the individual.**

TIP #09

Leverage a unified 'personal profile' to create a tailored experience

If you can't connect the dots and **integrate insights coming from different channels**, you will fail to deliver a seamless experience.

Offer a **single, integrated view of customer data** to build a **'predictive journey'**, shifting from a **reactive 'learning' mode** to a **proactive 'personal consultant' mode.**

BEST PRACTICE: DISNEY

Disney knows the power of interconnections that omnichannel creates. In their new MyMagic+ theme park platform, the experience starts once you've booked your hotel. Disney starts to send you recommendations and delivers your family's MagicBands to your home.

During the trip, this RFID band is your mobile payment device, reservation system, admission ticket - your personal ID that tracks every move you make, providing valuable information to build your personal customer profile.

This way, Disney is not only able to build excitement before and during the trip, but they also get to know their customers better to provide great experiences. [Ref 21]
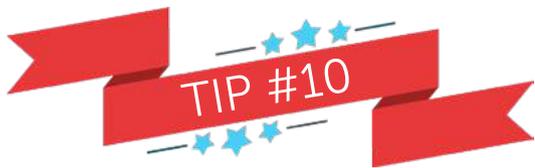
Rebrand 'sales representatives' to 'customer's expert friend' and 'product guru'

Nowadays, many companies - especially e-commerce businesses - don't want to invest too much in **proactive personal support** that goes **beyond 'reactive' customer service.**

It's a huge mistake. Statistics show that one of the most important **drivers** for customers to **shop at the physical stores** instead of purchasing online is that they **can get instant advice**. [Ref 22]

If you want to be a customer-centric omnichannel retailer, you need to **rethink the role of your sales representatives no matter which channel.**

 - Think about them as **'advisors' or 'product gurus'** whose aim is not to sell but to make your customers' lives better, easier, happier.

BEST PRACTICE: BIRCHBOX

Beauty and lifestyle company Birchbox is a great example for an internet-only company that turned into an empathetic, successful omnichannel retailer.

To complement - and promote - their core subscription-based e-commerce business, they've opened physical locations to let customers experience new products better.

Customers can seek the advice of store assistants - they act like a 'beauty editor best friend'. This is built on the insight that young females are longing for expert advice and intimate bonding alike.

This mentality can help Birchbox engage customers them to become loyal customers of the core business. [Ref 23]

 - When it comes to your **digital platforms**, encourage your customers to **proactively reach out to your 'experts'**, for example by providing advanced **Click-to-Call** solutions.

 - It's especially important on **key product pages** or at **conversion points** such as checkout.

 - A powerful interaction at the right moment can be a truly effective instrument to **increase sales conversion**!

Another potential reason why your customers believe that your customer experience is unsatisfactory: it doesn't have the 'thrilling factor' that the digital customer generation is craving for.

TIP +1

Digital gets physical: integrate smart technology with a wow effect

As one of the most exciting retail store concepts, New York City based Story phrased it once, retailers have to create new measures such as **'experience per square foot'**. [Ref 24]

The most innovative retailers have already started working on turning their stores into **'fulfillment centers'** where:

- **Experiencing the products in a branded environment** is at the heart of the concept;

- Whilst **digital solutions** are integrated for that **extra - omnichannel - thrill**.

However, this approach only works if it does not feel 'l'art pour l'art', i.e. when it truly resonates with your target customer culture to be able to deliver an engaging brand experience.

For example, see augmented shopping experiences.

Augmented Reality technology can create **virtual experiences** igniting customers' imagination without limits of space or reality. [Ref 25]
Retailers can **present their product offerings** virtually whilst **optimizing inventory space.**

BEST PRACTICE: LOWE'S

Canadian home design and furniture retailer's Holoroom concept is a home improvement simulator that applies Augmented Reality to provide homeowners an intuitive experience by watching the 'room of their dreams' come alive.

It was introduced in stores in 2014 to help customers remodel their homes. In-store customers were able to 'see' and experience bathroom furniture virtually yet in real time and order the desired items.

This helped Lowe's minimize inventory space and streamline customer demand. [Ref 26]

Wearable technology can also help deliver great experiences.

Enterprise applications developed for smart glasses or wearable cameras can help companies **share real-time store experiences with remote customers** (e.g. see Whisbi's related software innovation).

BEST PRACTICE: YVES SAINT LAURENT

Yves Saint Laurent recorded make-up counter makeovers in real time with Google Glass camera worn by the sales reps at Bloomingdale's department store in New York City.

The make-up artists were showing the customers how to get the most out of their face - and the products themselves.

The recorded video helped customers follow the same steps at home - using the new products. [Ref 27]

You may also use interactive displays.

Interactive displays quickly became tech-savvy retailers' favorite. In most cases, they **integrate online or mobile payment options** (see shoppable screens at Kate Spade Saturday or Marks & Spencer e-boutique).

BEST PRACTICE: POLO RALPH LAUREN & HARRODS

UK luxury department store Harrods installed 15 interactive window displays to promote the new Polo Ralph Lauren line for women.

Mobile proximity technology powered by Proxama and large stickers let consumers scan or tap with their phones to reach an interactive map of the 'Fashion Lab' area in store where the products were located.
They also provided a link to the mobile site to trigger instant purchase — even outside of business hours. [Ref 28]

Digital storytelling can also help create engagement.

Engaging product content can help you **differentiate your brand and portfolio** on a saturated market by creating an **emotional connection** with your customers at any touchpoint.

BEST PRACTICE: KATE SPAD

Fashion retailer Kate Spade - celebrated for their interactive shoppable display under their Saturday brand - partnered with Perch to turn in-store tables into interactive hands-on displays at their New York City store.

These displays provided animation and branded media such as Instagram photos and style tips, connected to the 'showcased' items placed on the table — somewhat similar to to hovering over an item online to see more information in a pop up window.

The displays worked like a tool to tell brand stories, let customers learn more about the designs and help them close the sale - and the retailer has actually seen a higher sell-through for products on the table. [Ref 29]

Finally, mobile solutions are also blooming.

See the rise of **beacon technology** with in-door positioning and personalized triggers (such as customized offers, call-to-actions) in real time. Companies such as **Waitrose** [Ref 30] have been the first pioneers.

Closing remarks: looking ahead

Referring to how we started off, omnichannel thinking is no longer a 'tool' for customer satisfaction, neither just a trend. It is a **necessity** that needs to infiltrate every cell of the company's imaginary body.

Experts point out that assessing and prioritizing initiatives with a unified channel approach is crucial as **retailers simply cannot risk 'a poor customer experience from poorly executed capabilities'**. [Ref 31]

In fact, experts such as PwC also predict that the 'omnichannel' evolution will soon reach a point when **thinking in channels at all will seem obsolete**.

This so called **'total retail experience'** age will bring:

   - A **unified brand story** that promises an absolutely customer-centric, **superior, connected experience** at all touchpoints.

   - An **integrated back-office model** with agile technology that (only) focuses on **solutions that the target market truly desires**. [Ref 32]

We finish this report with a quote that perfectly describes this new mindset:

'For too long, the customer has been of interest mainly to the sales department or to market research. But today, consumers empowered by technology have enormous expectations that raise the bar for every part of a retail organization.' [Ref 33]

Retailers, take note. The revolution is progressing at full speed and if you snooze, you lose.

About Whisbi's unique approach:

Whisbi is a global provider of innovative omnichannel SaaS solutions that help businesses increase online sales conversion, monetize web visits, make retail operations more productive whilst offering a customer experience with a unique differentiator value.

Can you imagine sales reps wearing smart glasses or using the camera of an Android smartphone to showcase products to web visitors in real time as if they were in a real store? Whisbi is the only solution that, in one click, automatically 'teleports' online visitors to physical stores or a showroom, via sales reps who are wearing smart glasses (e.g. Google Glass, Epson) or using the camera of an Android device.

Companies such as Vodafone, Fiat and Telefónica have at least doubled their sales conversion rates thanks to the Whisbi effect.

Signs of success: 400% revenue growth in 2010-2013. US patented technology. International awards. 100+ employees. Headquarters in Barcelona and teams in London, Madrid and Sao Paulo. VC backed.

To learn more about how you can increase your sales conversion rate and improve your customer experience by showing your products in real time, please contact:
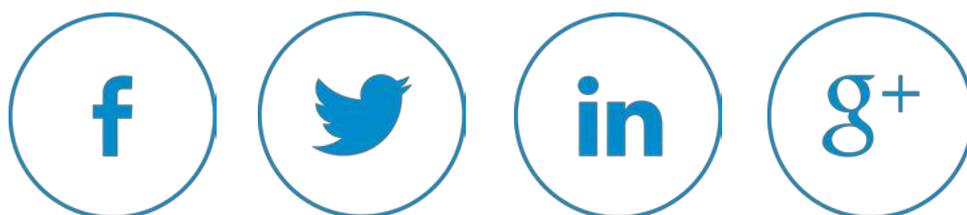
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